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Edin Hajdarpasic. *Whose Bosnia? Nationalism and Political Imagination in the Balkans, 1840-1914.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015. xii + 271 pp. $45.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8014-5371-7.

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Whose Bosnia? by Edin Hajdarpasic is one of the most important recent contributions to the scholarship of the Balkan region, especially Bosnia. This painstakingly researched and carefully designed study combines historical (archival), anthropological, and literary methods and approaches to grasp and interpret the "often overlooked historical terrain" of Bosnia's political and social life during the formative 1840-1914 period (p. 3). This period is crucial because it is during this time that imperial and national forces and visions of the region powerfully converged and diverged, producing a dynamic political and social field.

The proliferation of nationalism in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Bosnia has been addressed in many studies before Hajdarpasic's, but *Whose Bosnia?* is different. Instead of delivering concrete "truths" and finished conclusions, the author invites the reader "to pause" and "meet" the local and regional actors navigating this multifaceted political terrain. While the majority of analyses have captured some of these processes, Hajdarpasic's account "goes beyond given templates of *ethnos* and *demos* and instead points to 'the people' as a site of *praxis*" (p. 19). Importantly, Hajdarpasic considers "the people" to be an impossible subject, and praxis, for him, is dynamic and contested. As a result, instead of packaging this period in a broad, nationalism-dominated, linear, and "finished" historical account, as is often the case, Hajdarpasic allows the reader to witness people's and institutions' multiple and often conflicting motivations, identifications, and aspirations. Consequently, individual actors become alive and multilayered. In this way, Hajdarpasic is able to both recognize and evaluate nationalism as a vital and resistant political force and depict it as an open-ended never able to complete sociopolitical process of people-making. Instead of seeing Bosnian history as a "chronicle of long-simmering ethnic tensions and conflict or as a story attesting to enduring solidarity and peaceful coexistence between Serbs, Croats and Muslims," this book "reconsiders historical formations of these foundational categories and focuses

on the recurring slippages between otherness and sameness, division and unity, in national projects revolving around Bosnia" (p. 15). Furthermore, Hajdarpasic insists that it is precisely this open-endedness and unfinished nature of nationalism that leads to "nation-compulsion"—the very resilience and importance of nationalism as a political force, which generates patriotic subjects (p. 2).

The book is refreshing both methodologically and theoretically. The author's methodology covers vast geopolitical space, and it includes multiple (sub)national and regional archives as well as rich and detailed archival descriptions of major (and not so major) actors and events. The book is also refreshing in its theoretical utilization of a "grounded theoretical approach to nationalist politics," borrowed from anthropologist Claudio Lomnitz; Hajdarpasic quotes Lomnitz, who says the approach "works through a vast and dense set of facts ... to confront, and hopefully, to transgress, an order of confinement."[1] This approach requires a turn to the "groundwork of South Slavic national activists—ethnographers, insurgents, teachers, academics, poets, politicians, and other actors ...—in order to closely read the archives that they produced and to analyze the issues that they struggled with as they claimed Bosnia for different causes" (p. 5). This combination of insightful theoretical investigations and meticulous empirical data collection allows the author to develop his own repertoire of new and converging analytical categories, including "suffering," "voice," "youth," and my favorite, "(br)other." These analytic interventions allow for the multiplicity of seemingly contradictory and slippery projects and emotions to coexist. Hajdarpasic does not leave these tensions unexplored, but rather takes a reader on a journey where historically rooted explanations make these tensions understandable, painting places as complex yet approachable, and people as complex humans invested with both passion and reason.

In this way, by using, for example, "(br)other" as a subject of national history, an analytic strategy, and an interpretative device, Hajdarpasic is able to capture the position of a Muslim co-national who is both "brother" and "other" to his Serb and Croat co-nationalists in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Bosnia. As a result, "(br)other" is not "an independent term defining substance but an interpretative device for analyzing the claims of sameness and otherness," which helps us understand the struggles over national belonging of Bosnian Muslims (p. 202). (Br)other therefore stands for both living antagonisms and intimacy between co-nationals. To show how the liminal figure of (br)other is applied to shape nationalist narratives, Hajdarpasic draws on multiple ethnographic and archival materials, which make these processes much more accessible to the reader. For example, he writes: "With Turkish rule gone from Bosnia after 1878, new interpretations tried to soften the tone of the earlier literature in an effort to incorporate Muslims into the South Slav community. The Croatian theologian Cherubin Šegvić, for example, argued in 1894 that Mažuranić's epic is 'not the bitter spill of hatred against Muhammedans, whom [Mažuranić] considered his born brothers, but rather a vivid image of ... cruel tyranny' as a general phenomenon" (p. 80). Hajdarpasic offers numerous similar examples of these narrative reinterpretations, which show historically shaped processes of inclusion and exclusion of Bosnian Muslims from Serbian and Croatian nationhood.

In conclusion, I and many of my colleagues, along with other scholars of the Balkans and beyond, have been waiting for an account like this for a long time—an account that is not afraid to ask difficult questions; approach them studiously, seriously, and in an interdisciplinary fashion; and answer them in a way that is supported by vast amount of evidence, grace, and honesty.

Note

[1]. Claudio Lomnitz, *Deep Mexico, Silent Mexico: An Anthropology of Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), xix.

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